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Notebook
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NATURALIST NOTEBOOK

AUGUST 1969

VOLUME V

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Photo by J. Walker

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AUGUST

THE MONTH OF MUSHROOMS



Photo by R. Dewire

August is the month of mushrooms. Mushrooms come in all sizes, shapes, and colors. They do not make their own food, but instead live off decaying plants and animals. They are most often found in late summer and seem to prefer cool wooded areas.

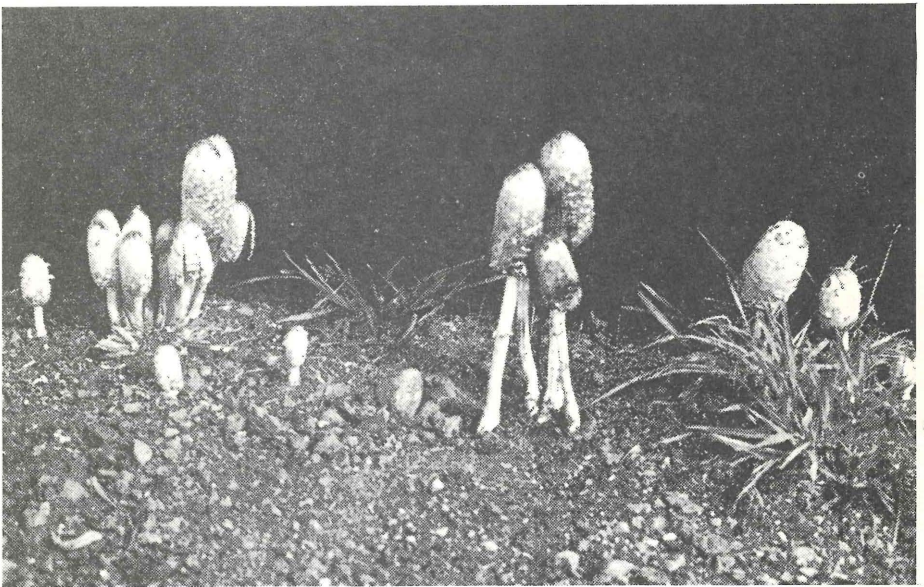
Mushrooms have another common name - toadstools. Generally, people call those which you can eat mushrooms and those which are poisonous toadstools. The only problem is that most people don't know how to tell the good ones from the bad ones.

You should never eat a mushroom found in the woods unless you are absolutely sure it is okay. It takes a great deal of studying up on them to know what to look for. Taking a chance foolishly and eating one may make you very sick and could even kill you! The safest thing to do when in doubt is to eat your mushrooms out of a can purchased at your local grocery store.

Aside from being edible or not, mushrooms are often very beautiful and strange looking. There are few colors that they don't come in; there are even purple ones! See how many colors you can find. Their shapes may remind you of other things - pieces of coral, a beef steak, or devil's horns. Some mushrooms may be no bigger than the head of a pin while others are a foot in diameter and may stand a foot high.

The large bracket or shelf fungus will jut out from tree trunks rather than grow from the ground. Even if the tree is alive, the presence of a bracket fungus indicates that it is dead at the point where they grow from. This is a good indicator as to whether or not you have a healthy tree.

Go looking for mushrooms this month to see how many different kinds there are in our wooded areas. You may be surprised at the numbers!



Inky Cap Mushroom

AUGUST'S CALENDAR

August is the month of buzzing cicadas and sandpiper flocks.

August 1... Wood Ducks show up on small ponds, flocking up prior to migration.

August 4... Cardinal Flowers - our reddest flowers - bloom in wet, open places.

August 6... Shorebirds are found on mudflats throughout the area.

August 9... Praying Mantis can be found hunting in fields for other insects.

August 12... White Bone-set flowers in fields.

August 13... Marsh Hawks return to our wetlands, flying low, searching for rodents.

August 15... First northern warblers arrive here signalling the start of the fall land bird migration.

August 18... Young of many birds such as cardinals and titmice begin to come regularly to bird feeders.

August 19... Monarch Butterflies become more and more noticeable as they begin flying South.

August 20... Ironwood opens its deep purple flowers in wet fields.

August 21... Nighthawks begin migrating and evenings are the best time to see them pass overhead.

August 27... The Full Sturgeon Moon shines brightly.

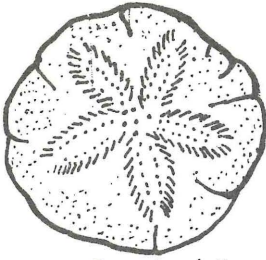
August 28... Purple Gerardia, Marsh Fleabane, and Salt Marsh Aster all brighten our marshes with flowers.

August 31... Blue-winged Teal and Black Ducks have begun migrating South.



ALONG THE SHORE

by BARBARA KASHANSKI



Sand dollar
skeleton

THE SAND DOLLAR

How many of you have found a sand dollar washed up on a beach? Did you think it belonged to an animal? Probably not because there isn't very much about the skeleton of a sand dollar, or sea biscuit, that looks like a living animal. When washed up by the tide, this unusual creature looks like a white chalky disc with a lovely star-shaped pattern on its back. When alive, the sand dollar is greenish in color.

Like the starfish, the sand dollar has spines and tube feet. The spines are very small and make this round little animal look like it is covered in velvet. How does a sand dollar eat? On the ends of the spines are hairlike structures called cilia. The cilia keep waving about and cause currents which bring tiny organic foods and plankton closer to the surface of the sand dollar until the food is caught in the mucus which surrounds the spines. Then it is passed along paths of mucus to the underside where the mouth is found.

If the shell or 'test', as it is called for the sand dollar, is broken it cannot grow again or regenerate as can the rays of the starfish. But because of its round flat shape the sea biscuit doesn't usually get into as much trouble as its cousin. Also, the flat shape keeps it from being rolled around by the water or shifting sand. If a sand dollar does get turned over, there's no problem. It just does a somersault and gets right side up again. That is a sight that would be fun to see.

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY *

OUR COMMON "WEEDS"

Photographs & notes by
Joan Walker

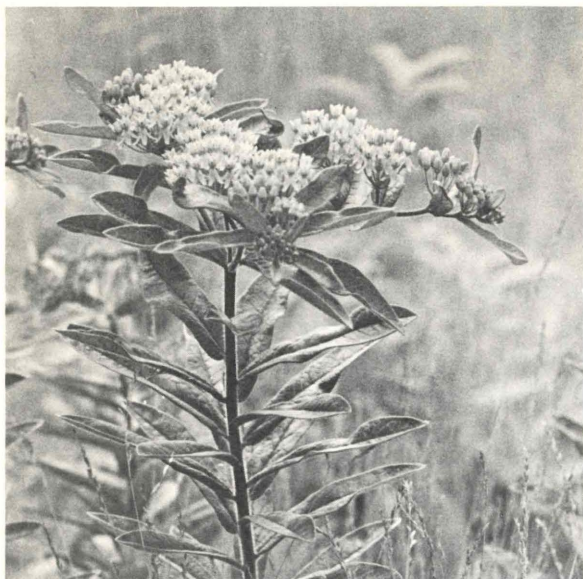
The flowers pictured here are ones that can be found very commonly along roads, in fields, and occasionally in gardens. They are often uprooted from gardens though, and discarded as weeds. Close inspection of these plants clearly show how pretty and intricate their designs are.

The camera used for all the pictures shown here was a 35 mm. Nikkormat. The film used was Tri-x.

DAISY

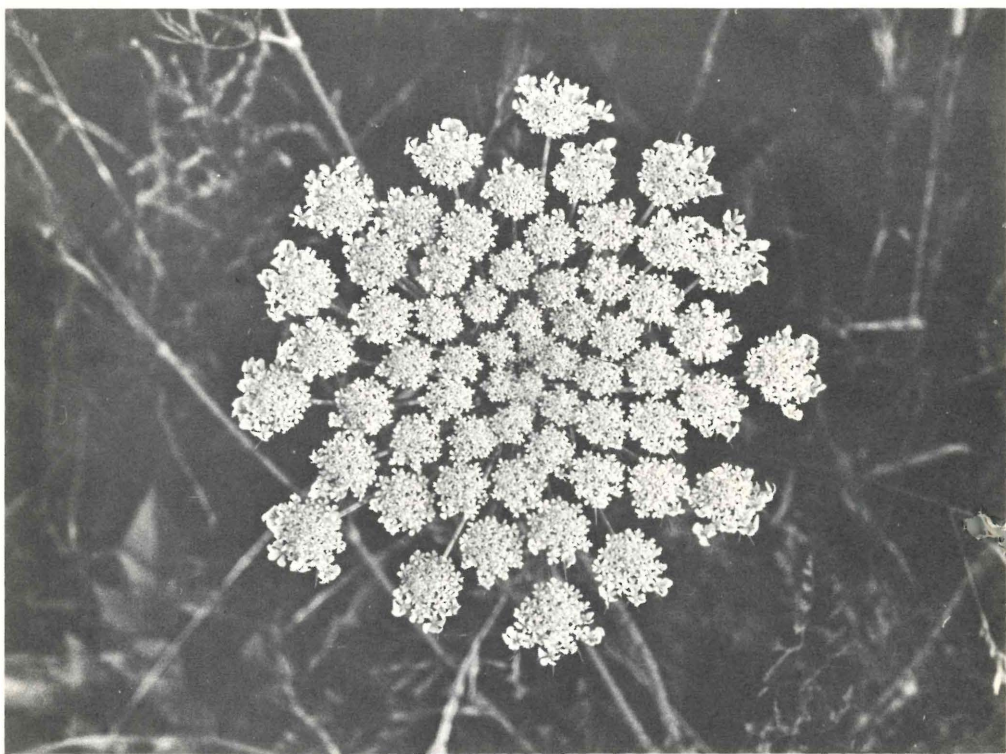


Sunny weather. A +2 close-up lens was used on a 50 mm. lens. The picture was taken at f 16 at 1/1,000 of a second.



LEFT: Cloudy weather. A 135mm. lens was used. The lens opening was f 5.6 at 1/1,000 of a second.

BUTTERFLY
WEED



WILD CARROT

RIGHT: A cloudy day. A +2 lens was put on a 50 mm. lens and the picture taken at f 11 at a speed of 1/250 of a second.



BOTTOM: An overcast day. The normal (50mm.) lens was fitted with the +2 close-up lens. The picture was shot at f 11 at 1/125 of a second.

BUTTERFLY
WEED



MORNING GLORY

ASTER



This handsome flower was discovered in a field on a bright sunny day. The +2 closeup lens was attached to the 50 mm. lens and the picture taken at f/11 at 1/1,000 of a second.

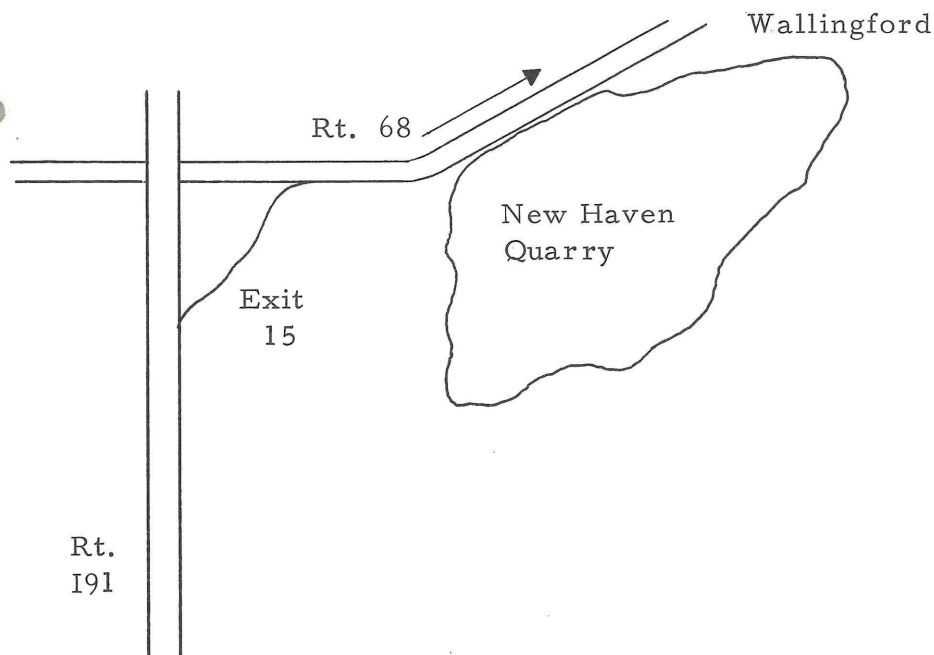
*This column will appear "now and then" as a special feature in the Newsletter. It is hoped that those interested in photographing Nature may get some ideas from it.

Ed.

ROCK HOUNDS

by JERRY THEILER

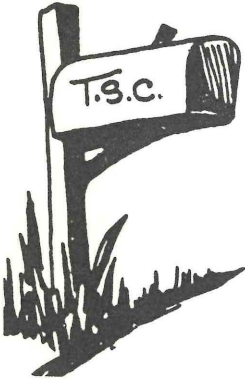
NEW HAVEN TRAP ROCK QUARRY #1



Trap rock is a dark fine-grained igneous (fire formed) rock. It is often used as a road fill. Bubbles trapped in trap rock leave hollows. These hollows sometimes fill up with crystals of various minerals. Among the minerals in this location are: calcite, prehnite, and some of the zeoliths (a mineral group found in many mineral books).

Always obtain permission before collecting in a working quarry from the foreman or other quarry officials. It is very important that you observe safety rules in such cases also.

ARTICLES OF ADULT INTEREST



We welcome notice of Conservation activities or problems for inclusion in this section of the Naturalist's Notebook. . . . Please let us know of your local activity so that others may be aware of your efforts and lend their support where possible. . . .

AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILMS: The Science Center will be presenting the Audubon Wildlife Films for the third season. We feel that in many ways this will be the finest season we have had to date. While there will only be four programs this year instead of five, their quality will more than make up for the lesser number.

First of all, this year's lectures will be presented at Palmer Auditorium at Connecticut College. The auditorium is larger, darker, and the projector brighter so that the quality of the pictures will be improved.

Secondly, the programs themselves are exceptional. We have had a number of our members ask us for a program on wildlife that is local. For them, we have John Bulger's "New England Saga" which shows the four seasons in New England from its mountains to the sea.

We have also had a number of requests for a screen tour on the Everglades. This year we have William Anderson's "Our Unique Water Wilderness - The Everglades" which will beautifully illustrate one of our country's most spectacular natural areas.

For us in Southeastern Connecticut and probably anyone else in the world who has any interest in birds, it will indeed be a thrill to come and enjoy Roger Tory Peterson of Old Lyme. He will present his film "Galapagos - Wild Eden" showing the interesting and bizarre wildlife on the Galapagos Islands. Dr. Peterson's "Field Guides" have become famous the world over and it will indeed be an honor to have him here.

Our fourth program is presented by Dr. Walter J. Breckenridge and is entitled "Island Treasure". It is a look at an island wilderness far up the Mississippi River. It is a veritable "Treasure Island" of songbirds, gamebirds, animals, and plant life common to the United States and Canada.

These excellent programs plus our new location will result in a top quality season. Members will be receiving their brochures in the mail soon and should get their ticket requests in early as it is expected that attendance will be even higher this year. Non-members may receive information by contacting the Science Center.

OSPREYS: In its July issue, National Geographic Magazine has an article on the plight of the ospreys by Roger Tory Peterson. Much of the article deals with the Old Lyme colony of birds and the work being done with them. There is a real possibility that they will vanish from Connecticut by 1975. In next month's Newsletter we plan to present the results of the nestings of our Connecticut ospreys.

YOUR OWN NATURE JAUNT

by *BOB DEWIRE*

To A Field

A field is a place of great activity in late summer. Flowers are more abundant and for this reason there are many more insects present. These attract more birds and insect-eating mammals which attract larger predators. Visit a field and you will see what I mean.

Walk into a field and you will probably first notice the wildflowers. Yellow coneflowers and goldenrods, purple Joe-pye weeds and thistles, white bonesets and wild carrots, and blue chicorys and astors will be among those giving a great variety of color to the field.

Look closely at the flowers as you pass by. The varieties of insects on them will seem endless. Beetles such as the red and black milkweed beetle on milkweed and the yellow and black locust borer on goldenrod will be sought by the large praying mantis for a meal. Grasshoppers of all types will jump out ahead of you. Some have wings while others do not. You may be startled when a large dragonfly flies out of the grass right in front of you. You were looking right at that spot but never saw him so well was he camouflaged. The largest of these dragonflies is the green darner with a wingspread of at least four inches. Other smaller ones with brown and red bodies will be common as will be damselflies in blues and greens.

One of the most common groups of insects at this time will be the bees and wasps. Besides our common

honeybees, bumble bees, and paper wasps, there are the dark blue mud daubers, small iridescent green cuckoo wasps, orange and black hunter's wasps, yellow jackets and many, many others. Butterflies are also common now with monarchs, their look-alike cousin the viceroy, and hunter's butterfly all flashing their orange wings.

Many of these insects may fall victim to the insect-catching animals you will come across in the field. A small snake may slip quickly through the grass by your feet. Brown in color, it would be a DeKay's snake. Dark grey with a gold ring around its neck would identify it as a ringnecked snake. Both of these frequent fields where they live on a diet of insects.

A large web appears in front of you with a handsomely colored black and yellow spider in it. A grasshopper scared ahead jumps into the web and thrashes wildly. Instantly the golden garden spider is on him and wraps him up in its webbing creating a little mummy. The spider will dine on the grasshopper later on in leisure.

Birds around the field include the kingbird and phoebe who dart out from branches along the edge of the field to snap up their food while barn and tree swallows fly overhead pursuing their food wildly. Bats will come out in the evening as will nighthawks that are migrating late in the month.

Mice and voles are common but not often seen. A sparrow hawk may suddenly dive into the field and then come up with a mouse in his talons. Woodchucks are active and young ones are often visible following their mother around. They have enemies to watch out for too, like the red fox, but it is a lucky day when you are able to see one of these.

CONNECTICUT CREATURES *by MIKE WALKER*

THE GREY TREEFROG

Just before one of the afternoon programs at our Outdoor Nature Festival last spring a small and very excited boy ran up to a group of us standing near the main entrance to the Connecticut Arboretum. When I saw what he had in his hand I became even more excited than he was. He held a large pearl-grey frog that clung to the back of his hand with long, "suction cup" tipped toes.

His prize was the rarely seen Grey Treefrog. This animal and the Spring Peeper are the only members of the Treefrog Family in Connecticut. Treefrogs can be distinguished from other frogs by the round adhesive disks at the end of their toes. These disks enable treefrogs to cling to stems, leaves, and branches, and they spend much of their time in shrubs and trees searching through the foliage for the small insects that make up most of their diet.

The Grey Treefrog is much more arboreal than the Spring Peeper, and rarely descends from the tree-tops except to breed at the edge of ponds and shallow lakes in late spring. During the breeding season and throughout the summer, usually at dusk, the Grey Treefrogs call from the tops of trees and bushes. Often



Photo by J. Walker

the little animals are particularly vocal before rain and their trilling calls are a fairly reliable indication of showers on the way.

Treefrogs do most of their foraging at night, hopping nimbly through treetop foliage in search of moths, June bugs, and other night-flying insects. During the day the frog takes refuge in a knothole or between ridges of bark on the underside of a limb. The treefrog's grey coloration and granular skin provide excellent camouflage. Underneath the animal is light grey except for brilliant orange streaks on the underside of the rear legs.

Occasionally, violent thunderstorms may blow treefrogs to the ground and they may sometimes be found in weeds and low bushes after a storm. Grey Treefrogs are comparatively rare and if one is discovered it should be handled very little and released as soon as possible.

FIELD NOTES

June 15 to July 15

As is the usual case with this period there is little to report. Most animals are busy raising families. Next month, as the fall migration begins, there should be a sharp increase in reports.

Flowering dates include CHICORY on June 18th, MILK-WEED on June 28th, INDIAN PIPES on June 29th, BUTTER-FLY WEED on July 5th, and GOLDENROD on July 12th.

Young ACADIAN FLYCATCHERS were seen at the Devil's Hopyard indicating a successful season for them. The presence of PARULA WARBLERS there throughout the period indicates nesters - an excellent record.

The CANVASBACK is still on the Mystic River and a BUFFLEHEAD has been at Morgan Pond in Ledyard since June 29th.

A RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER was seen on Valley Rd. in Groton on July 12th.

First signs of the shorebird migration were sightings of 2 DOWITCHERS and 3 LEAST SANDPIPERS at Galilee on July 5th. By the 7th the number of DOWITCHERS there were 7.

A PORPOISE was found washed up on the shore at Black Point on July 7th.

A CICADA called at the Science Center on July 14th.

A young male HAIRY WOODPECKER coming to feeders at the Peace Sanctuary has the red spot on his head in the wrong place! Instead of on the back of the head near the neck, it is on the forehead just over the eyes. It makes for a strange looking bird.

The first uncommon shorebird to be seen in the fall migration was a WHIMBREL at Quonochontaug, R. I. on July 15th.

Contributors to this column were Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Bates, Grace Bissell, Bob & Mary Jean Dewire, Barbara Goodwin, Michael Walker, and Nancy Wilson.

ACTIVITIES FOR AUGUST

The Summer Environmental Science Study Day Camp for children of members of the Science Center continues during this month.

The Wednesday evening field trips will be continued through this month with three trips scheduled.

August 6 -- 6:30 P.M. Harkness Memorial State Park. There should be a lot of shorebird activity in the marsh and along the beach. Beachcombing always results in some interesting finds. We will meet at the Harkness Parking Lot.

August 13 -- 6:30 P.M. Peace Sanctuary. A trip into the woods to see late summer wildflowers and many birds with their young. Meet at the entrance to the Sanctuary on River Road.

August 20 -- 6:30 P.M. Barn Island. With the shorebird migration underway, and the northward flight of many of the herons, Barn Island should be quite productive. We will meet at the State Boat Landing at Barn Island.

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MICHAEL WALKER--*Curator*

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